

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: ETRN, SENV, UK, FR

SUBJ: CONCORDE

REF: LONDON 6294

1. CONCORDE WORKERS (OVER 1000 ACCORDING TO PRESS) FROM BRITISH AIRCRAFT CORPORATION AND ROLLS-ROYCE PLANTS IN BRISTOL AREA STAGED MARCH IN DOWNTOWN LONDON MAY 23. FOLLOWING MARCH, MEMBERS OF GROUP JOINED OTHERS FROM BAC WEYBRIDGE PLANT TO HAND IN PETITION AT 10 DOWNING STREET URGING CONTINUATION OF CONCORDE PROGRAM. MESSAGES OF SUPPORT FROM FRANCE ALSO HANDED IN. ACCORDING TO PRESS, BRISTOL WORKERS HAVE HAD MESSAGE FROM FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING SAYING "I CONFIRM THE VERY GREAT INTEREST THAT I HAVE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE CONCORDE OPERATION, ON THE TECHNICAL AS WELL AS THE COMMERCIAL PLANE, AND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AERONAUTICAL INDUSTRY."

2. WHILE WORKERS DEMONSTRATED IN WHITEHALL AREA, M.P.S IN PARLIAMENT ASKED STATUS OF UKG DECISION ON CONCORDE AND WERE TOLD THAT DECISION NOT LIKELY TO BE MADE ANYTIME IN NEXT FEW WEEKS AND WOULD ONLY BE TAKEN

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FOLLOWING FURTHER MINISTERIAL-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WITH

FRENCH. NO DATE YET SET FOR MINISTERS' MEETING.

3. BAC IS PUBLICALLY DISTRIBUTING A NEW REPORT IN WHICH IT ASSERTS THAT COST OF CANCELLING CONCORDE COULD BE AS MUCH AS 600 MILLION POUNDS. BAC CONTENDS THAT DOMESTIC COSTS COULD AMOUNT TO 200 MILLION POUNDS AND FRENCH COMPENSATION CLAIM COULD BE AS HIGH AS 400 MILLION POUNDS AND COMPANY ARGUES THEREFORE THAT IT "SELF-EVIDENTLY" LESS EXPENSIVE TO CARRY ON THE PROJECT.

4. BRITISH AIRWAYS CHAIRMAN, NICHOLSON, ATTEMPTED TO EXTRICATE BA FROM CONTROVERSY DEVELOPING OVER CONCORDE BY TELLING ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS MEETING ON MAY 22 THAT BA IS "KEEN" TO FLY CONCORDE AND THAT AIRLINE GREATLY RESPECTS TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENTS THAT CONCORDE REPRESENTS BUT THAT BECAUSE OF NUMBER OF UNCERTAINTIES CONCERNING ITS OPERATION, BA WILL NEED GUARANTEE OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE "SHOULD THE PROJECT PROVE IN PRACTICE TO BE TOO EXPENSIVE FOR THE AIRLINE TO SUPPORT FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES."

5. IN EARLIER MEETING WITH EMBOFF, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BA'S OVERSEAS DIVISION, ROSS STANTON, MAN WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING CONCORDE INTO COMMERCIAL SERVICE, APPEARED CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PROSPECT. HE TOLD US HE THOUGHT THAT IF DECISION MAKING ON CONCORDE'S FUTURE HAD NOT BEEN INTERRUPTED BY DEATH OF FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY REAL POSSIBILITY THAT PROJECT WOULD HAVE BEEN CANCELLED. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF DELAY, HE NOW THINKS IT LIKELY THAT UKG WILL AGREE TO 16 AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION PROGRAM EXCEPT IN UNLIKELY EVENT FRENCH PROVE WILLING TO BACK OUT.

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